

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit

General Information Bulletin

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<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/>

HB/CTB G23/2008

8 December 2008

Contact	Queries about the <ul style="list-style-type: none">• technical content of this bulletin, contact details are given at the end of each article• distribution of this bulletin, contact Corporate Document Services Ltd Orderline<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Email: orderline@cds.co.uk• bulletin in general, contact Kath Murphy<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Email: Kath.Murphy@dwp.gsi.gov.uk
Who should read	All Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) staff
Action	For information

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Right time indicator – additional guidance on a change event notified by telephone

- 1 *HB/CTB Circulars A2/2008 and A5/2008* gave general guidance on the major changes for calculating performance following the introduction of the HB/CTB performance indicators in April 2008. We would like to bring to the attention of local authorities (LAs) some additional guidance around change events notified by telephone, to use together with these earlier publications.
- 2 All telephone notifications of changes, if they result in a superseding decision count towards the indicator. However, when to start the count for the purpose of the right time indicator will differ depending on the LAs circumstances as follows
 - If an LA **has** published a dedicated telephone number for the use of making a claim, and receives a change event notified by telephone, the LA may decide that written confirmation or evidence is required to implement that change. The processing time for the change event **must** start on receipt of the telephone call regardless of any requirement for written confirmation.
 - If an LA has **not** published a dedicated telephone number for the use of making a claim, the processing time will start when the written confirmation of the change is received.
- 3 Please remember, the updated FAQs on the Performance Indicators can be found at
<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/housingbenefit/performance-value-for-money/faq.asp>
- 4 If you have any queries regarding this or any other performance related matter please contact us at Performance-Framework@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Correction to U2/2008 - Announcements in the Pre Budget Report

- 5 In the Pre Budget Report 2008 presented to Parliament on 24 November, the Chancellor announced that the Government is bringing forward the April 2009 increase in Child Benefit (ChB) to January.
- 6 At present all ChB payments are fully taken into account as income in working age HB/CTB. However, ChB should continue to be taken into account at the pre-January rate only, ie the increase should be ignored, between
 - 5 January and 31 March 2009 when rent is paid monthly or at any interval which is not a week or multiples of a week, and
 - 5 January and 4 April when rent is paid on a weekly basis

- 7 When personal allowances in HB/CTB are increased, from 1 April or 5 April 2009 respectively, the full amount of ChB should once again be taken into account until October 2009, from when it will receive the already announced full and permanent disregard.
- 8 The Chancellor also announced that the Government will make a one-off payment of £60 in the New Year to pensioners and to others entitled to the Christmas Bonus. This payment will represent a second instalment of the 2008 Christmas Bonus and should therefore be wholly disregarded on the same basis as the annual £10 Christmas Bonus payment.
- 9 Please direct any enquiries to Richard.Metcalf@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Local Authority PinS foundation learning

- 10 Since the 1 December 2008 we have changed the way LA benefit investigators achieve their Accredited Counter Fraud Specialist status, to follow a *Blended Learning* route.
- 11 It will still be worth 40 credits and it has been accredited by Portsmouth University.

What is the Blend?

- 12 Investigators will carry out a series of modular *e learning* from the comfort of their own office. This will be supported by a number of *workbook* exercises with the assistance of their line manager or mentor.
- 13 They will also attend *classroom* events throughout to consolidate the other methods of their learning.
- 14 The final part of the blend is an individual *case study* which will form the basis of their investigative interviewing event and will be the case they will be required to give evidence on in their Court procedures event.

Where can I find the blended learning?

- 15 We are using a dedicated part of the IRRV website as the platform for access to this learning. Everything an investigator needs will be on that site. Before they commence their learning they will be issued with an individual password and given full instructions on how and when to begin their learning.

How do I apply?

- 16 You should contact Maxine Dunne as you do now either by completing the appropriate forms or by emailing her direct at MAXINE.DUNNE@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK

What if I have already applied?

- 17 All people who are currently awaiting their foundation learning will be notified in the near future of their enrolment on the new blended learning programme.
- 18 If you have any questions about the PinS foundation blended learning, contact either
- Maxine Dunne on 01372853323, or
 - Craig Smith on 07884117672

New appeals system – additional information

- 19 Full guidance on the new rules has already been provided in *HB/CTB Circular A21/2008*. Further information is now being made available by The Tribunal Service for your use.
- 20 Attached to this bulletin (*Appendix 1*) is a letter confirming that the first phase of the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act has been brought into force. The letter includes a website address where LAs can download a copy of the new tribunal rules, and obtain copies of the forms that will be needed when dealing with appeals.
- 21 In addition, The Tribunal Service have provided a short guide to the rule changes (*Appendix 2*) for easy reference and a copy of the new form (UT2) (*Appendix 3*) LAs need to use when submitting an application for permission to appeal to the Upper Tribunal.
- 22 Further information is also available on The Tribunal Service website at <http://www.tribunals.gov.uk/Tribunals/Rules/rules.htm> or you can email Emily.Synnott@tribunals.gsi.gov.uk.

Statutory Instruments

- 23 The following Statutory Instruments (SIs) have now been laid
- 2008 No 2928, The Social Security (Incapacity Benefit Work-focused Interviews) Regulations 2008, coming into force 15 December 2008
 - 2008 No 2987, The Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (Amendment) (No.3) Regulations 2008, coming into force from 22 December 2008
 - 2008 No 3051, The Social Security (Lone Parents and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2008, coming into force from 23 November 2008
 - 2008 No 3064, The Christmas Bonus (Relevant Week) Order 2008, coming into force from 27 November 2008

24 Copies of SIs can now be downloaded from DWP's own website <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/advisers/docs/lawvols/bluevol/> and the website of the Office of Publication Information <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/stat.htm>